P820070-0196

FAIM 594

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

May 20, 1982

Dear Senator Proxmire:

I am writing in response to your inquiry of April 13, regarding questions Mr. Harding Schaack asked about compensation paid by the Government of Israel for its attack on the Navy communications vessel USS Liberty on June 8, 1967.

Israel paid in full in 1968 and 1969 the U.S. Government claims for $3,323,500 on behalf of the 34 men who were killed and $3,452,275 on behalf of the 164 injured members of the crew. Although monetary compensation for wrongful death or injury is not adequate recompense for the pain and suffering involved, the families and individuals concerned received the full amount of these claims.

Physical damage to the ship was estimated at $7,600,000 in 1967, and the United States also submitted to the Government of Israel a claim for compensation in that amount. (It was later decided that the usefulness of the vessel to the Navy did not justify the cost of repairs, and the Liberty was ultimately sold for scrap, so final repair costs were never determined.) Following a series of contacts through diplomatic channels, the U.S. in 1980 accepted Israel's offer to pay $6,000,000 in installments as final settlement of the claim for damage to the vessel. $4,000,000 of that claim has already been paid and the final installment of $2,000,000 is due on January 15, 1983.

Regarding Mr. Schaack's interest in obtaining a copy of the official accounting of the incident, a U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry made a full investigation of the attack upon the Liberty in 1967. The Court reached the conclusion that it did not have sufficient information to make a judgment about the reasons for the Israeli action against the Liberty. For its part, Israel stated that the attack was the result of confusion and error by its armed forces during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and made an immediate apology, accepted complete responsibility and offered to pay compensation for the deaths and injuries. The transcript of the proceedings of the Navy Court of Inquiry has been available to the public for several years. Mr. Schaack may wish to request a copy of this document directly from the Department of the Navy.

The Honorable
William Proxmire,
United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY John Kelley DATE 1/24/83
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ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS
DATE ASSIGNED: RELEASABLE
RELEASE DATE:
E.O. 12356 EXEMPTIONS:

P820070-0197

I hope this information is useful in replying to Mr. Schaack.

With cordial regards,

Sincerely,

Powell A. Moore
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.